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THE WEST INDIES:

BEING A DESCRIPTION OF THE ISLANDS,

PROGRESS OF CHRISTIANITY, EDUCATION, AND LIBERTY

AMONG THE COLORED POPULATION GENERALLY.

BY MRS. NANCY PRINCE.

BOSTON:
DOW & JACKSON, PRINTERS, 14 DEVONSHIRE ST.
1841.

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WEST INDIES.

A denomination under which is comprehended a large chain of islands, extended in a curve from the Florida shore on the northern peninsula of America, to the Gulf of Venezuela on the southern. These islands belong to five European powers, viz. Great Britian, Spain, France, Holland and Denmark. An inhabitant of New England can form no idea of the climate and the productions of these islands. Many of the particulars that are here mentioned, are peculiar to them all.

The climate in all the West India Islands is nearly the same, allowing for those accidental differences, which the several situations and qualities of the lands themselves produce; as they lie within the tropic of Cancer, and the sun often is almost at the meridian, over their heads, they are continually subjected to a heat that would be intolerable, but for the trade winds, which are so refreshing, as to enable the inhabitants to attend to their concerns, even under a noon-day sun: as the night advances, a breeze begins to be perceived, which blows smartly from the land, as it were, from the centre towards the sea, to all points of the compass at once. The rains make the only distinction of seasons in these islands. The trees are green the year round; they have no cold, or frost; our heaviest rains are but dews, comparatively: with them, floods of water are poured from the clouds. About May, the periodical rains from the South may be expected. After then the tropical summer in all its splendor. The nights are calm and serene, the moon shines more brightly than in New England, as do the planets, and the beautiful galaxy. From the middle of August to the end of September, the heat is most oppressive, the sea breeze is interrupted, and calms warn the inhabitants of the periodical rains; which fall in torrents about the beginning of October.

JAMAICA,

The most considerable and valuable of the British West India Islands, lies between the 75th and the 79th degrees of west longitude from London, and between 17 and 18 north latitude; it is of an oval figure, 150 miles long, from East to West, and about 60 miles broad in the middle, containing 4,080,000 acres. An elevated ridge, called the Blue Mountains, runs lengthwise from East to West, whence numerous rivers take their rise on both sides. The year is distinguished into two seasons, wet and dry. The months of July, August and September are called the hurricane months. The best houses are generally built low, on account of the hurricanes and earthquakes; and the colored people's huts made of reeds, will hold only two or three persons. However pleasant the sun may rise, in a moment the scene may be changed, a violent storm will suddenly arise, attended with thunder and lightning, the rain falls in torrents, and the seas and rivers rise with terrible destruction. I witnessed this awful scene in June last at Kingston, the capital of Jamaica; the foundations of many houses were destroyed; the waters, as they rushed from the mountains, brought with them the produce of the earth, large branches of trees, and their fruit together; many persons were drowned endeavoring to reach their homes from their various occupations; those who reached their homes were often obliged to travel many miles out of their usual way. Many young children without a parent's care, were at this time destroyed. A poor old woman speaking of these calamities to the writer, thus expressed herself, "not so bad now as in the time of slavery, then God spoke very loud to *Bucker* (the white people) to let us go. Thank God, ever since that, they give us up, we go pray, and we have it not so bad like as before." I would recommend this poor woman's remark to the fair sons and daughters of America, the land of the pilgrims. "Then God spoke very loud." May these words be engraved on the post of every door; in this land of New England God speaks very loud, and while his judgments are in the earth, may the inhabitants learn righteousness! The mountains that intersect this Island seem composed of rocks thrown up by frequent earth-

quakes or volcanoes. These rocks, though having little soil, are adorned with a great variety of beautiful trees, growing from the fissures, which are nourished by frequent rains, and flourish in perpetual spring. From these mountains flow a vast number of small rivers of pure water, which sometimes fall in cataracts, from stupenduous heights; these, with the brilliant verdure of the trees, form a most delightful landscape. Ridges of smaller mountains are on each side of this great chain; on these, coffee grows in great abundance; the valleys or plains between these ridges, are level beyond what is usually found in similar situations. The highest land in the Island is Blue mountain Peak, 7150 feet above the sea. The most extensive plain is 30 miles long and 5 broad. Black river, in the Parish of St. Elizabeth, is the only one navigable; flat-boats bring down produce from plantations about 30 miles up the river. Along the coast, and on the plains the weather is very hot; but in the mountains, the air is pure and wholesome; the longest days in Summer are about thirteen hours, and the shortest in winter about eleven. In the plains are found several salt fountains, and in the mountains, not far from Spanish Town, is a hot bath of great medicinal virtues; this gives relief in the complaint called the dry bowels malady, which, excepting the bilious and yellow fevers, is one of the most terrible distempers of Jamaica. The general produce of this Island is sugar, rum, molasses, ginger, cotton, indigo, pimento, cocoa, coffees, several kinds of woods, and medicinal drugs. Fruits are in great plenty, as oranges, lemons, shaddocks, citrons, pomegranates, pine-apples, melons, pompions, guavas, and many others. Here are trees whose wood, when dry, is incorruptible; here is found the wild cinnamon tree, the mahogany, the cabbage, the palm, yielding an oil much esteemed for food and medicine. Here too is the soap tree, whose berries are useful in washing. The plantain is produced in Jamaica in abundance, and is one of the most agreeable and nutritious vegetables in the world: it grows about four feet in height, and the fruit grows in clusters, which is filled with a luscious sweet pulp. The Banana is very similar to the plantain, but not so sweet. The whole Island is divided into three counties, Middlesex, Surry, and Cornwall, and these into six towns, twenty parishes, and twenty-seven villages.

This Island was originally part of the Spanish Empire in America, but it was taken by the English in 1656.

Cromwell had fitted out a squadron under Penn and Venables, to reduce the Spanish Island of Hispaniola, but there this squadron was unsuccessful, and the commanders, of their own accord, to atone for this misfortune, made a descent on Jamaica, and having arrived at St. Jago, soon compelled the whole Island to surrender. Ever since, it has been subject to the English, and the government, next to that of Ireland, is the richest in the disposal of the crown. Point Royal was formerly the capital of Jamaica, it stood upon the point of a narrow neck of land, which towards the sea, forms part of the border of a very fine harbor of its own name. The conveniences of this harbor, which was capable of containing a thousand sail of large ships, and of such depth as to allow them to load and unload with the greatest ease, weighed so much with the inhabitants, that they chose to build their capital on this spot, although the place was a hot dry sand, and produced none of the necessaries of life, not even fresh water. About the beginning of the year 1692, no place for its size could be compared to this town for trade, wealth, and an entire corruption of manners. In the month of June in this year, an earthquake which shook the whole Island to the foundation, totally overwhelmed this city, so as to leave, in one quarter, not even the smallest vestige remaining. In two minutes the earth opened and swallowed up nine-tenths of the houses, and two thousand people. The waters gushed out from the openings of the earth, and tumbled the people on heaps: some of them had the good fortune to catch hold of beams and rafters of houses, and were afterwards saved by boats. Several ships were cast away in the harbor, and the Swan Frigate, which lay in the Dock, was carried over the tops of sinking houses, and did not overset, but afforded a retreat to some hundreds of people, who saved their lives upon her An officer who was in the town, at that time, says the earth opened and shut very quick in some places, and he saw several people sink down to the middle, and others appeared with their heads just above ground, and were squeezed to death. At Savannah above a thousand acres were sunk with the houses and people in them, the places appearing, for some time, like a lake; this was afterwards dried up, but no houses were seen. In some parts mountains were split, and at one place a plantation was removed to the distance of a mile. The inhabitants again rebuilt the city, but it was a second time, ten years

after, destroyed by a great fire. The extraordinary convenience of the harbor tempted them to build it once more, and once more in 1722, it was laid in rubbish by a hurricane, the most terrible on record. Such repeated calamities seemed to mark out this spot as a devoted place; the inhabitants therefore resolved to forsake it forever, and to reside at the opposite bay where they built Kingston, which is now the capital of the Island. In going up to Kingston, we pass over the part of and between Port Royal, leaving the mountains on the left, and a small town on the right. There are many handsome houses built there, one story high, with porticoes, and every convenience for those who are rich enough to live in them. Not far from Kingston stands Spanish Town, which though at present is inferior to Kingston, was once the capital of Jamaica, and is still the seat of Government. On the 3d of October, 1780, there was a dreadful hurricane, which overwhelmed the little sea-port town of Savannah la mer, in Jamaica, and part of the adjacent country: very few houses were left standing, and a great number of lives were lost, much damage was done also, and many lives lost in other parts of the Island. The same writer says, the misery and hardships of the slaves were truly moving, the ill treatment which they received so shortened their lives, that there is no natural increase of their numbers; many thousand are annually imported to supply the place of those who pine and die with the hardships which they receive. It is said, that they are stubborn, and must be ruled with a rod of iron: it must be borne in mind, that their tyrants are themselves the dregs of the English nation, and the refuse of the jails of Europe. In January, 1823, a Society was formed in London, for mitigating and gradually abolishing slavery, throughout the British dominions, called the Anti-Slavery Society. His Royal Highness, the Duke of Gloucester, was President of the Society, in the list of vice-presidents are the names of many of the most distinguished philanthropists of the day, and among them, that of the never to be forgotten Mr. Wilberforce; as a bold champion, we see him going forward, pleading the cause of our down trodden brethren. In the year 1834, it pleased God to break the chains from 800,000 human beings that had been held in a state of personal slavery; and this great event was effected through the instrumentality of Clarkson, Wilberforce, and other philanthropists of the day. The population of

Jamaica is nearly 400,000, that of Kingston, the capital, 40,000. There are many places of worship of various denominations, namely, church of England, and of Scotland, Wesleyan, the Baptists and Roman Catholics, besides a Jewish Synagogue. These all differ from those in New England, and from those I have seen elsewhere. The Baptists hold what they call class-meetings. They have men and women, deacons and deaconesses in these churches; these hold separate class-meetings, some of these can read and some cannot. These are the persons who hold the office of judges, and go round and urge the people to come at the class, and after they come in twice or three times they are considered candidates for baptism. Some pay fifty cents, and some more, for being baptized. The churches take nothing after they are baptized, they receive a ticket as a pasport into the church, paying one mark, a quarter, or more, and some less, but nothing short of tenpence, that is, two English shillings a year. They must attend their class once a week, and pay three pence a week, total twelve English shillings a year, besides the sums they pay once a month at communion, after service in the morning. On those occasions the minister retires, and the deacons examine the people to ascertain if each one has brought a ticket, if not, they cannot commune; after this, the minister returns and performs the ceremony, then they give their money, and go. The churches are very large, holding from four to six thousand, many bring wood and other presents to their class-leader as a token of their attachment; where there are so many communicants, these presents, and the money exacted, must greatly enrich these establishments. I know two who have left their homes to live with their class leaders, in order to have her prayers; most of the communicants are so ignorant of the ordinance that they join the church merely to have a decent burial; for if they are not members none will follow them to the grave, no prayers will be said over them; these are borne through the streets by four men, the coffin a rough box; not so if they are church members; as soon as the news spreads that one is dying, all the class with their leader will assemble at the place, and join in singing hymns; this, they say, is to help the spirit up to glory; this exercise sometimes continues all night, in so loud a strain, that it is seldom that any can sleep in the neighborhood.—The next day they bury their dead, the corpse is borne by four bear-

ers, some of the deacons preceding, and a great company of men and women following, the women first, dressed in white, with a strip of white cotton bound round the head, and falling to the ground. After they have buried their dead, the company return to the house and have a regular wake: they believe the spirit of the deceased is present with them for nine days, and they leave a place for them at the table, and pay them all the attention they give to the visible guests.

There is in Jamaica an institution, established in 1836, and called the Mico Institution; it is named after its founder, Madame Mico, who left a large sum of money to purchase, (or rather to ransom, the one being a Christian act, the other a sin against the Holy Ghost, who expressly forbids such traffic;) thus having corrected myself, I will resume. Madame Mico left this money to ransom the English who were in bondage to the Algerines; if there were any left, it was to be devoted to the instruction of the colored people in the British Islands; at this institution, six adults, men and women, are prepared for teachers. Whole number taught since the commencement 485—there is a day school for children, 29 is the regular number—whole number 2,491—Sabbath Schools 9, whole number taught 6,654—the adults and the Sunday scholars have to pay one Mack a month. Besides the Mico establishment, there are in Jamaica 27 Church Missionary Schools, where 2,461 children are taught gratis. Adult schools, 5—whole number taught, 475. Sabbath Schools 14—whole number taugh, 1,952. London Missionary Society Schools, 16—whole number taught not ascertained. National Schools, 38—whole number taught, 2,500.

The Wesleyan, Presbyterian and Moravian schools, besides these; it is supposed there are private schools where three or four thousand are educated in the city of Kingston, and twice that number in the streets, without the means of education. All the children and adults taught in the above named schools, are taxed £ 1 a year, except the English Church school, this is the most liberal. The Rev. Mr. Horton, a Baptist minister in Kingston, told me he had sent 90 children away from the Baptist school, because they did not bring their money. It is sufficient to say they had it not to bring!

Most of the people of Jamaica are emancipated slaves, many of them are old, worn out, and degraded. Those

who are able to work, have yet many obstacles to contend with, and very little to encourage them ; every advantage is taken of their ignorance ; the same spirit of cruelty is opposed to them as held them for centuries in bondage ; even religious teaching is bartered for their hard earnings, while they are allowed but 33 cents a day, and are told if they will not work for that, they shall not work at all ; an extortionary price is asked of them for every thing they may wish to purchase, even their Bibles are sold to them at a large advance on the first purchase. Where are their apologists, if they are found wanting in the strict morals that Christians ought to practice ? Who kindly says forgive them when they err ? " forgive them, this is the bitter fruit of slavery." Who has integrity sufficient to hold the balance when these poor people are to be weighed ? Yet their present state is blissful compared with slavery. Many of the farmers bring their produce twenty or thirty miles. Some have horses or poneys, but most of them bring their burdens on their heads. As I returned from St. Andrews mountain, where I had been sent for by a Mr. Rose, I was overtaken by a respectable looking man, on horseback ; we rode about ten miles in company. The story he told me of the wrongs he and his wife had endured while in slavery, are too horrible to narrate. My heart sickens when I think of it. He asked me many questions, such as where I came from ? why I came to that Island ? where had I lived ? &c.—I told him I was sent for by one of the missionaries to help him in his school. Indeed, said he, our color need the instruction. I asked him why the colored people did not hire themselves ?—we would be very glad to, he replied, but our money is taken from us so fast we cannot. Sometimes they say we must all bring 1 £ ; to raise this, we have to sell at a loss, or to borrow, so that we have nothing left for ourselves, the macaroon hunters take all—this is a nickname they give the missionaries and the class-leaders—a cutting sarcasm this ! Arrived at a tavern about 7 mile from Kingston, I bade the man adieu, and stopped for my guide. The inn-keeper kindly invited me in. He asked me several questions. I asked him as many. How do the people get along said I, since the emancipation ? The negroes, he replied, will have the Island in spite of the devil. Do not you see how they live, and how much they can bear ? we cannot do so. This man was an Engiishman, with a large family of mulatto children.

In May, the 18th, I attended the Baptist missionary meeting in Queen St. Chapel. The house was crowded. Several ministers spoke of the importance of sending the gospel to Africa; they complimented the congregation on their liberality the last year, when they gave one hundred pounds sterling; they hoped this year they would give five hundred pounds, as there were five thousand members at the present time. There was but one colored minister on the stand. It is generally the policy of these missionaries to have the sanction of colored ministers, to all their assesments and taxes. The colored people give more readily, and are less suspicious of imposition, if one from themselves recommends the measure. This the missionaries understand very well, and know how to take advantage of it. Wednesday, June 22d and 23d, the colored Baptists held their missionary meeting, the number of ministers, colored and mulattoes was 18, the colored magistrates were present. The resolutions that were offered were unanimously accepted, and every thing was done in love and harmony.—After taking up a contribution, they concluded with song and prayer, and returned home, saying jocosely, they would turn macaroon hunters.—Mack is the name of a small coin in circulatiou at Jamaica. I called, on my return, at the market and counted the different stalls. For vegetables and poultry, 196, all numbered, and under cover; besides 70 on the ground. These are all attended by colored women. The market is conveniently arranged, as they can close the gates and leave all safe. There are 19 stalls for fresh fish, 18 for pork, 30 for beef, 18 for turtle. These are all regular built markets, and all kept by colored men and women. These are all in one place. Besides, others may be found, as with us, all over the city. Thus it may be hoped, they are not the lying, stupid set of beings they have been called, but are enterprising and quick in their perceptions, determined to possess themselves, and to possess property besides, and quite able to take care of themselves. They wished to know why I was so inquisitive about them, I told them we have heard in America that you are lazy, and that emancipation has been no benefit to you; I wish to inform myself of the truth respecting you, and give a true representation of you on my return. Am I right? More than two hundred people were around me listening to what I said. They thanked me heartily, I gave them some tracts, and told them if it so pleased God, I

would come back to them, and bring them some more books, and try what could be done with some of the poor children to make them better. I then left them, and went to the East market, where there are thousands of all kinds and nations. The Jews and Spanish looked at me very black. The colored people gathered around me, I gave them little books and tracts, and told them I hoped to see them again.

There are in this street upwards of a thousand, young women and children, living in sin of every kind. From thence, I went to the goal, where were 17 men, but no women—in the house of correction were three hundred culprits. They are taken from there to work on plantations. Then I went to the admiral's house, where the emigrants find a shelter until they can find employment, then they work and pay for their passage. Many leave their homes and come to Jamaica, under the impression that they are to have their passage free, and, on reaching the Island, are to be found until they can provide for themselves. How the mistake originated, I am not able to say, but on arriving here, strangers, poor, and unacclimated, the debt for passage-money is hard and unexpected; it is remarkable that wherever they come from, whether fresh from Africa, from the other Islands, from the South or from New England, they all feel deceived on this point. I called on many Americans and found them poor and discontented, rueing the day they left their country, where, notwithstanding many obstacles, their parents had lived and died, which they had helped to conquer with their toil and blood

"Now shall their children stray abroad and starve in foreign lands."—I left America November 16th, 1840, in the ship Scion, Captain Mansfield, bound for Jamaica, freighted with ice and machinery for the silk factory. There were on board a number of handicraft-men and other passengers. We sailed on Monday afternoon, from Charlestown, Mass. It rained continually until Saturday. Sunday the 23d was a fine day. Mr. De Grass, a young colored clergyman, was invited to perform divine service, which he did with much propriety; he spoke of the dangers we had escaped, and the importance of being prepared to meet our God, (he died of fever about three weeks after arriving at Jamaica,) some who were able to attend came on deck and listened to him with respect, while others seemed

to look on in derision; these spent the afternoon and evening in card-playing. About twelve at night, a storm commenced; on Monday we were in great peril; the storm continued until Friday the 27th. On that day a sail was seen at some distance making towards us, the captain judging her to be a piratical vessel, ordered the women and children below, and the men to prepare for action—the pirates were not inclined to hazardan engagement; when they saw the deck filled with armed men they left us. Thus were we preserved from the storm and from the enemy. Sabbath, 29th, divine service, our attention was directed to the goodness of God in sparing us.

Monday,—and are we mortals still alive. Tuesday,—Thus far the Lord has led us on. Wednesday.—Thus far his power prolongs our days. Thursday—December 3d, to-day made Turks Island. Friday.—this day had a view of Hayti, its lofty mountains presented a sublime prospect. Saturday—a glance we had of Cuba. Sunday—December 6th, at six o'clock in the evening, dropped anchor at St. Anne harbor Jamaica. We blessed the Lord for his goodness, in sparing us to see the place of our destination; and here I will mention my object in visiting Jamaica. I hoped that I might aid (in some small degree) to raise up and encourage the emancipated inhabitants, and teach the young children to read and work, to fear God and put their trust in their Savior. Mr. Whitmarsh and his friend came on board and welcomed us. On Tuesday we went on shore to see the place and the people; my intention had been to go directly to Kingston, but the people urged me so to stay with them that I thought it my duty to comply, and wrote to Mr. Ingraham to that effect. I went first to see the minister, Mr. Abbot, thought, as he was out, I had better wait his return. The people promised to pay me for my services for them, or to send me to Kingston. When Mr. Abbot returned he made me an offer I readily accepted.—As I lodged in the house of one of the class-leaders, I attended her class a few times, when I learned the method, I stopped. She then commenced her authority, and gave me to understand if I did not comply, I should not have any pay from that society. I spoke to her of the necessity of being born of the spirit of God, before we became members of the church of Christ, and told her I was sorry to see the people blinded in such a way. She was very angry with me,

and soon accomplished her end, by complaining of me to the minister, and I soon found I was to be dismissed, unless I would yield obedience to this class-leader. I told the minister that I did not come there to be guided by a poor foolish woman. He then told me that I had spoken something about the necessity of moral conduct in church members. I told him I had, and in my opinion I was sorry to see it so much neglected. He replied, that he hoped I would not express myself so except to him ; they have the gospel, he continued, and let them come into the church. I do not approve of women societies ; those destroyed the world's convention ; the American women have too many of them. We talked one hour. He paid me for the time I had been there ; I continued till Jan. with the same opinion that something must be done for the elevation of the children, and it is for that I labor. On the Sabbath the minister from the pulpit spoke unkindly of me. This was in January. I am sorry to say the meeting house is more like a play house, than a place of worship. The pulpit stands about the middle of the building, behind are about six hundred children that belong to the society ; there they are placed for Sabbath School, and there they remain until service is over, playing all the time. The house is crowded with the aged and the young, the most part of them barefooted. Some have on bonnets, but most of the women wear straw hats such as our men wear. I gave several Bibles away, not knowing that I was hurting the ministers' sale, the people buy them of him at a great advance. I gave up my school at St. Ann, and on the 18th of March departed for Kingston, but took the fever and was obliged to remain until the 7th of April. The people of St. Ann fulfilled their promise which they made, to induce me to stop with them—on the 11th of April I arrived at Kingston, and was conducted to the Mico institution, where Mr. Ingraham directed me to find him ; he had lost his pulpit and his school, but Mr Venning the teacher kindly received me. I stayed there longer than I expected ; the next morning he kindly sent one of the young men with me to the packet for my baggage. I then called on the American Consul, he told me he was very glad to see me for such a purpose as I had in view in visiting Jamaica, but he said it was a folly for the Americans to come to the Island to better their condition ; he said they came to him every day praying him to send them home. He likewise mentioned to me the

great mortality amongst the emigrants. This same day I saw Mr. O—— one of our missionaries, who wished me to accompany him forty miles into the interior of the country. This same day I saw Mr Henshaw. On Saturday the 17th I received a letter from Fem Hill, in the county of St. Andrews, to come and assist Mr. Ross in one of the Mico schools; they sent for me and I went to see them, but took no part in the school. I saw Mr. Henshaw there. The day he left Jamaica for the United States, I begged him to tell the colored people of America not to go to Jamaica, for they would find themselves deceived. After a week I returned to Kingston with my mind fully settled what to do. I spent three weeks at the Mico establishment, and three weeks with my colored friends from America. On the 21st of April, I called to see Mr. Horton, a minister. He was much surprised to see me, and had much to say about my color, and showed much commiseration for my misfortune at being so black. My personal narrative I have placed last in this pamphlet, as of least consequence. I flatter myself my voyage to Jamaica has not been in vain. A door of usefulness seems opened to me there, with a zealous friend. And with the aid of the benevolent, I propose to establish at Kingston, or in the vicinity, an assylum for the orphan and the out-cast, where they may be taught without money and without price. To effect this, I have returned to this country to solicit aid, and trust I shall not ask in vain. The colored people of these United States are induced to remove to Jamaica, in consequence of the flattering offers made to them, to induce them to emigrate. Since my return they have been inquisitive to learn from me something respecting the place, and the people I have been among. For these inquiries I have written this book, that they may have the advantage of what information I have collected, and knowing the truth, they may no longer be deceived.

NANCY PRINCE.

NOTE. On page 9, line 21, it is said that there are six adults preparing for teachers in the Mico institution; it should have said 15; and that the whole number of teachers so prepared is 485—but the number is not really known. In this institution none are received except they can read and write, and bring good recommendations of their piety. A number have finished, and are teachers in different parts of the Island.

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